

believe that he would propose to use surveillance on members of the U.S. military to track their speech, to track their activity online, to track their movements online, all in an effort to decide if they might, in the future, commit acts that he disagrees with.

I submit to you, Madam President, not only is that wrong; it is blatantly unconstitutional—blatantly unconstitutional—and it is frightening. What is further frightening is that he would be nominated for a leadership position in the Department of Defense.

I call on the President of the United States to withdraw this nomination today, just as he should withdraw his unconstitutional disinformation board that he is attempting to force on the American people as we speak. This is the most radically anti-free-speech administration in American history. Their actions are an affront to the basic constitutional values of this Nation, including and especially the First Amendment.

I am appalled—appalled—at what this administration is doing—censoring American citizens, surveilling them—and now advocating it in the U.S. military, to the men and women who put their lives on the line?

So, no, I will not consent to have this individual, who never should have been nominated for this position, fast-tracked to be confirmed without a vote, without a single, solitary vote on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

Mr. Kaine. Madam President, will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. Hawley. I think you have the floor, Senator; so, yes, I think—

Mr. Kaine. Will the Senator yield for a question?

It strikes me that the Senator's objection is you do not want to have this candidate—the bloc of them advanced without a vote. If I can guarantee that you get a vote on these nominations, will you drop your objection?

Mr. Hawley. Can I respond to that?

Mr. Kaine. Yeah. I mean, I know you will vote no. You have made it plain. But if I can guarantee you would get a vote, will you drop your objection?

Mr. Hawley. On all eight of them, Senator?

Mr. Kaine. Yeah.

Mr. Hawley. To have a vote on the floor?

Mr. Kaine. Yes.

Mr. Hawley. I would be happy to take a vote on the floor on all eight nominations.

Mr. Kaine. And that is what my point is. We are not fast-tracking these without a vote. This is a motion to allow a vote en bloc on the floor. So you will have an opportunity to vote against Mr. Chaudhary or all of these. This is not a motion to immediately approve them without a vote. It is just a motion to bring them up so that you and others can vote on these nominees. That is all I am seeking.

And so my request, basically, would guarantee you a vote on all of these

nominations if you drop your objection.

Mr. Hawley. Is this a recorded vote on the floor, Senator?

Mr. Kaine. It would be a—yes. It would be en bloc, but it is a recorded vote, is my understanding.

And, again, Madam President, just to clarify, my motion is only that the Senate be allowed to vote on these nominees: Alex Wagner for Assistant Secretary of the Air Force; Ashish Vazirani for Deputy Under Secretary of Defense; Christopher Lowman, Assistant Secretary of Defense; Lester Martinez-Lopez, Assistant Secretary of Defense; Agnes Schaefer, Assistant Secretary of the Army; Franklin Parker, Assistant Secretary of the Navy; Musetta Tia Johnson, Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces; and Ravi Chaudhary, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force.

I understand my colleague will vote no, but all I am moving is for the Senate to be able to have a vote on these nominees.

Mr. Hawley. Senator, you want to vote on all eight at one time; you don't want to vote on each one?

Mr. Kaine. My motion is to consider them, yes, en bloc; but it would be a recorded vote, is my understanding.

Mr. Hawley. What I propose to do here is—there are multiple Senators on this side of the aisle besides myself who have objections to different multiple of these. What I propose to do is object to this now, but I think we can work something out on this going forward.

So I think—do I have the floor now?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia has the floor, and there is a pending unanimous consent request.

Mr. Hawley. OK. So I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. Kaine. I appreciate the objection being heard, and I would just say to my colleague, I hope we could work out a deal that would enable us to have a floor vote where my colleague could vote as he chooses on these nominees. This was not an attempt to bypass a vote; it was just an effort to have a vote where everybody can be recorded on the nominees. I hope we can work that out.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

#### ISSUES FACING THE NATION

Mr. Blunt. Madam President, I want to continue to talk about some of the challenges the administration is facing and the country is facing. Let me talk for just a little bit about the border, about the economy, and about our ongoing concerns on COVID.

First of all, the border—we have had a number of people come to the floor and talk about the border, the problems at the border. Many of these problems were really self-inflicted on day 1. The President, on the first day of his Presidency—and I chaired the inauguration on January 20. Hours after

that, the President decided to stop building the wall.

I was never an advocate of needing a wall everywhere along the southern border, but we had a wall in lots of places already. It was doing some good, but it wasn't doing as much good as it needed to do. And just the idea that we—with the material on the ground and the old wall torn down—would decide to stop building the wall, I think, started these problems.

And if that wasn't enough, then-President Trump had made arrangements, the State Department had made arrangements—everybody involved—with Mexico to have people who were applying for asylum wait for their court date in Mexico. It was my view at the time that we should do anything we could to help the Mexican Government make that work because the alternative was people would come into the United States and not show up for an asylum date later.

In Mexico, they have learned that they weren't going to qualify for asylum because fewer than—9 out of 10 people, roughly, will not qualify. You found that out before you got into the United States and successfully had entered our country, even though you weren't eligible to. If you were waiting in Mexico and you found a lawyer to talk to and maybe even a way to hear your case in some way there, you would find out that you weren't going to qualify for asylum 8½ times or 9 times out of 10, and that is where you should have found that out.

To come in the country and wait for months to have a court date that you may or may not show up for just simply has not worked, and everybody that understands this system understands it doesn't work. And everybody that understands the obligation of a government understands that a government has some obligation to control its own borders, and you don't control your own borders by having people come into the country that aren't legally eligible to come into the country and then just stay here. So that policy produced real chaos.

And then title 42, under the public health law, was another thing that we put in place, as we put all kinds of other COVID-related protections in place. And now we want to eliminate title 42. The only place, apparently—if you follow the CDC closely right now—that we don't need to up our game on COVID protection is the border of the United States.

None of these things makes sense. We have too many people who have been encouraged wrongly and told: You come to the United States, you ask for asylum, they let you into the United States, and then you don't show up for your asylum hearing.

I am for legal immigration. I am for solving the Dreamer problem. I am for doing a lot of things that we need to do to make our immigration laws work properly.

We need to understand the workforce needs of the country. We need to understand what to do about people who came or stayed illegally. But we also need to understand how to secure the border. And that is where, for any of these other things to work, you have to do that.

The COVID problem, as I said, appears to only be a problem at the CDC—well, actually, it appears to be a problem everywhere but the border. The CDC, just yesterday, had a new rule that even for domestic travel, people should now—their advice is have a test for domestic travel—before you get on an airplane to go domestically, to have that test.

The efforts that we were working on and working hard on to replenish the categories that have been spent for research, particularly for the therapeutics that we need to have a stock of that haven't been fully certified yet—so they have to be the Government is the purchaser of those—we were working on a \$10 billion bill. And even this morning again, the Secretary of Commerce, at our appropriations hearing, said: Well, that would just be a start. We need 10 or 20 or 30 billion more before the end of this fiscal year than we currently have, and it is an emergency—10, 20, 30 billion more than we have now.

But at the border, no problem at all. At the border, this is no problem. We need billions of dollars to deal with it internally. We need to not only have fewer tests, which everybody agrees, fewer standards for domestic travel; we now need a new standard, they say, for domestic travel. Surely they will think about that. And while we are negotiating, again, spending, this issue comes out simultaneously that the border is a problem.

And then, of course, everybody knows the economy is a problem. All you have got to do to find out the economy is a problem is go to the gas station or go to the grocery store, and most Americans do that and do it a lot. And when gas prices go up, when food prices go up, every family knows it.

What we are seeing now is inflation that I think it is 8.5 percent. It may be settling in at 8.5 percent. But wherever it settles in, it is a whole lot higher than it was at any time during the Obama administration. The highest month in the entire Obama administration of inflation—that is not a year average—the highest single month was 3.4 percent. Under President Trump, the highest single month was 2.9 percent. We are now at 8.5 percent, and the Producer Price Index has been in double digits since December. That is usually a sign that the other index is going to follow that double-digit, scary number that is out there.

So energy policies that produced exactly the result you would think they would: higher energy prices; spending policies: the American Rescue Plan. I thought, at the time, it was a final COVID bill, but when you looked at the

bill before we had a chance to vote on it and saw it, it really didn't have very much to do with COVID. Maybe 6 percent of the \$1.9 trillion went to COVID. The rest of it went to things that put money in people's pockets to help them recover in an economy that was already recovering.

You can't spend \$1.9 trillion in a short period of time, even in the biggest and most vibrant economy in the world, and not drive up prices. So whether it is inflation, whether it is the economic stress—I talked to a group of Missouri realtors today, and, of course, they are beginning to see people wonder if they can afford a house at the interest rates that are out in front of us. It makes a big difference if the interest payment is based on 3.5 percent interest or 5.5 or 6.5 or 7.5 or, as it was in the mid 1980s, 11 to 15 percent interest.

These are issues we need to get under control. Most of these issues have an explanation that is rooted in confused policy decisions in the administration.

I look forward to those confused policy decisions heading in a different direction. Let's look at the information. Let's be realistic. Let's not continue to see all of these things headed in a direction that makes no common sense in America today.

I yield the floor.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

#### AMERICA CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR MANUFACTURING, PRE-EMINENCE IN TECHNOLOGY, AND ECONOMIC STRENGTH ACT OF 2022

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session and resume consideration of the House message to accompany H.R. 4521, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

House message to accompany H.R. 4521, a bill to provide for a coordinated Federal research initiative to ensure continued United States leadership in engineering biology.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

#### MOTION TO INSTRUCT

Mr. PAUL. Madam President, I call up my motion to instruct conferees, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. PAUL] moves that the managers on the part of the Senate at the conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the Senate amendment to the bill H.R. 4521 be instructed to insist that the final conference report include the provisions contained in section 6107 of the Senate amendment (relating to prohibiting funds made available to any Federal agency from being used for gain-of-function research conducted in China).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 2

minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote on the Paul motion to instruct.

Mr. PAUL. Last year, the Senate unanimously adopted my amendment to prevent taxpayer dollars from being used to finance gain-of-function research conducted in China. My motion to instruct asks that this language be incorporated into the final bill.

Gain-of-function research enhances the severity or transmissibility of existing viruses that may infect humans. The dangers are so acute that from 2014 to 2017, the NIH suspended funding for all gain-of-function research projects.

While we may never know whether the pandemic arose from a lab in Wuhan or occurred naturally, the emergence of COVID serves as a reminder that dangerous research conducted in a secret and totalitarian country is simply too risky to fund. Congress must ensure that taxpayer dollars will not be used to fund gain-of-function research in China.

I urge a "yes" vote.

Mr. Kaine. I yield back all time on the Democrats' side.

#### VOTE ON MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is yielded back.

The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

Mr. PAUL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### MOTION TO INSTRUCT

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, please call up my motion to instruct conferees, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Wyoming [Mr. BARRASSO] moves that the managers on the part of the Senate at the conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the Senate amendment to the bill H.R. 4521 be instructed to insist that the final conference report include provisions that require immediate development of a 2022–2027 Federal oil and gas leasing program on the outer Continental Shelf, which shall be finalized not later than June 30, 2022, and which shall provide for a minimum of 10 regionwide oil and gas lease sales in the Gulf of Mexico and Alaska Regions of the outer Continental Shelf, with a minimum of 2 oil and gas lease sales per calendar year, not fewer than 1 of which shall be in the Gulf of Mexico Region each calendar year.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote on the Barrasso motion to instruct.